

AFRICA NEWS REPORT



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AEF401 10/21/2004

United States Helping Africa Win Its Fight Against Terrorism
(Ambassador Cofer Black pledges continued U.S. support) (840)

By Charles W. Corey

Washington File Staff Writer

Washington -- The war against terrorism is being waged with vigor in Africa, and the United States is committed to helping African nations achieve terror-free -- and more prosperous -- societies, pledged Ambassador Cofer Black, the U.S. coordinator for counterterrorism.

Speaking in Algiers October 12 at the Second Intergovernmental High-Level Meeting on the Prevention and Combating of Terrorism in Africa, Black said, "We must all work together to combat terrorism, and we must work globally, regionally, and bilaterally" because today's terrorists operate worldwide.

"Terrorists often raise funds in one country, plan and train in another, and conduct operations in a third -- all the while communicating, recruiting, and traveling across borders," he said. "No single nation can defeat this multinational threat alone."

"African nations must find an African solution," he added. "In cooperation with each other, by sharing information, by assisting each other's legal systems, by securing mutual borders, and by making it clear that political violence is no longer acceptable, Africans can defeat terrorists and find a better way for all the African people."

America supports these efforts both morally and practically, Black said, citing President Bush's \$100 million East Africa Counterterrorism Initiative as evidence of the high level of commitment of the United States.

That initiative, he said, provides key states in the Horn of Africa with training of the military forces for coastal and border security, helps build capacity for aviation security, and gives assistance for regional efforts against terrorist financing and training for police. It also includes education and outreach components to counter the influence of extremist groups, he noted.

The \$7.75 million Pan Sahel Initiative provides similar assistance on the opposite side of the continent, providing training and equipment to the nations of the Sahel region to improve border security and deny the use of their territory to terrorists and criminals.

Algeria, in cooperating with the Pan Sahel Initiative partner nations of Chad, Niger, Mali and Mauritania, has demonstrated its commitment to this regional effort, he added.

Black warned however, that even though training and equipment are important, it takes more to deal with and eliminate terrorism. "Strong militaries are necessary for a government to protect its citizens against external threats, and strong law enforcement, prosecution, and judicial regimes are essential to preserve internal peace and security." But these alone are not enough to defeat terrorism, he warned.

The United States, Black said, recognizes that all nations have other priorities besides fighting terrorism -- economic development, combating AIDS, good governance, health care, and alleviating poverty -- but they must not "be used as excuses to bow out of the struggle against terrorism."

"Terrorists," he reminded everyone, "are not born terrorists. Terrorists choose the way of violence because they believe something is lacking in their lives. ... Poverty does not create terrorists, though it is likely a factor in whether an alienated young person turns to violence."

"In fact, the struggle against terrorism is also in part the struggle for a better society. Success in improving the lives of the people is success against terrorism. ... When people are less desperate, they will be better able to resist the lures of money and status that terrorists promise to their recruits. So we must work together to improve the lives of the people," he explained.

He reminded his audience that Africa is no stranger to terrorism: "In 1998, the United States was again the victim of terrorism in Africa. Although the U.S. was the apparent target, thousands of innocent Kenyan and Tanzanian citizens were also victims."

Africa has fought back, he said. Algeria has suffered from attacks by terrorists since the 1990s, but the government persevered and now the terrorists are in retreat. In Uganda, he pointed out, the Lord's Resistance Army "is also losing headway. The government of Uganda has combined military strength with offers of amnesty to move forward in defeating the terrorists."

Black expressed hope that the African Union's Center for Study and Research on Terrorism can be the beginning of a new forum for cooperation and mutual assistance among African states and their partners in the international community.

With the aid of international institutions (like the United Nations), functional organizations (like the International Civil Aviation Organization), and regional and sub-regional groups (like the African Union), countries of the world, he said, can join together to take the necessary actions to defeat the terrorists, wherever they are.

"We can prevent and disrupt terrorist activity by working to secure our borders, control illegal immigration, strengthen customs enforcement, and develop strong legal and financial regulatory systems to criminalize terrorism and terrorism finance. We can marshal our shared resources ... to deter terrorists from targeting weaker states or from using them for safe havens or fund raising. And by sharing information ... we can bring terrorists to justice," he said.

(The Washington File is a product of the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://usinfo.state.gov>)

AEF402 10/21/2004

U.S. Policy Consensus on Africa Encourages South African Envoy

(Ambassador Masekela cites nonpartisanship at Africa Society event) (590)

By Jim Fisher-Thompson

Washington File Staff Writer

Washington -- "We are at an extraordinary juncture in the relationship between the United States and the continent of Africa," says South African Ambassador Barbara Masekela. "Never before has there been such consensus on what needs to be done so that Africa can lift itself into a new era of prosperity, peace and fulfilled potential."

Masekela, who was named by President Thabo Mbeki to be envoy to Washington in June 2003, made her comments at an Africa Society awards ceremony for Representatives Ed Royce (Republican of California) and Donald Payne (Democrat of New Jersey) October 14.

The Capitol Hill luncheon was sponsored by the educational arm of the National Summit on Africa, an advocacy organization seeking to build a constituency for Africa in America,

for the presentation of its first annual "Visionary" award to the two lawmakers.

National Summit on Africa President Leonard Robinson told 200 guests attending the event that Royce and Payne "have played a significant role in cultivating a more Africa-oriented atmosphere in the House of Representatives. From pushing through the African Growth and Opportunity Act [AGOA] ... to fighting for more resources to end wars, to seeking innovative solutions to age-old problems such as famine and hunger."

Referring to the broad consensus in Congress that the two helped craft, Ambassador Masekela said, "Of course it makes it much easier to be an African ambassador when Africa is not a matter of partisan dispute."

Royce and Payne, Masekela said, have "patiently, deliberately and consistently articulated the message that Africa matters. Their message of globalization has not been a selective one, nor has it been paternalistic. It is a bold message that presumes that African actors themselves must -- and can -- act on their own behalf, and that any assistance must pass a sustainability test."

She added, "We look confidently to leaders like Congressman Royce and Congressman Payne -- and to organizations like the Africa Society -- to broaden appreciation in this great country of the momentous changes under way in Africa and of how Africans themselves are driving them."

There has been broad bipartisan support for the Bush administration's policies of helping Africans battle diseases like HIV/AIDS and assisting African economies in building prosperity through export-led growth and government reform. The African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA), landmark trade legislation forged in the Clinton administration and extended twice under Bush, is the best example of policy consensus in the last 10 years of a normally contentious Congress.

Masekela said: "We are at the start of a great journey of renewal, whose benefits and economic returns will be felt globally as new markets and exciting new investment opportunities open up for our partners from all corners of the world. AGOA not only complements our efforts as Africans to become a competitive part of the global economy; it is a dynamic that harnesses our talents in creating wealth and opportunity for all our people in Africa and the U.S."

Africans for their part, Masekela said, are "moving to take full responsibility for peace and stability in our region and are building the mechanisms and fostering the consensus needed to achieve that goal. We are starting to implement a continent-wide development program -- the New Partnership for Africa's Development [NEPAD] -- of our own designing and for whose success or failure we will be accountable."

(The Washington File is a product of the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://usinfo.state.gov>)

AEF501 10/22/2004

White House Reports on Humanitarian Assistance in Darfur (United States leads international relief effort) (360)

The White House issued a statement October 21 that outlines current U.S. efforts to provide humanitarian relief to the Darfur region in Sudan and calls on members of the international community to work together.

The statement also praises the African Union peacekeeping force that has been deployed to bring security to the region.

The White House statement follows:

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

October 21, 2004

STATEMENT BY THE PRESS SECRETARY

Humanitarian Assistance for the People of Darfur

The United States is working to reduce suffering from the Darfur crisis. With manpower and money, we continue to support the humanitarian efforts underway in order to avert an even greater loss of life in the region.

The United States leads the world in responding to the crisis in Darfur. We have provided over \$300 million in aid to date for food, shelter, access to clean water, and basic health services for the 1.5 million displaced people of Darfur. Recognizing the severity of crisis, the United States has already exceeded its humanitarian aid pledge for 2005 and will provide additional assistance.

The United States has disaster specialists on the ground, is assisting UN organizations and their efforts, is funding dozens of NGOs that directly assist people in need, is funding human rights monitoring, and is engaging the Sudanese government to further improve humanitarian access to the region. This support, combined with that of other countries, has made it possible for at least some assistance to reach 90 percent of Darfur's displaced people.

Though there has been some progress in reducing the suffering and loss of life, the crisis in Darfur continues. The world community must work together to bring an end to the crisis while simultaneously supporting persons already displaced. We commend the African Union's efforts to stem the violence and call on the world to support their efforts. We also urge the international community to respond generously to fund the vital programs that support the victims in both Chad and Sudan. Only when the people of Darfur can safely return home will the job be done.

(Distributed by the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://usinfo.state.gov>)

AEF301 10/20/2004

Peace Talks In Sudan Present Unique Opportunity for Women (NGO leaders speak at CSIS conference) (940)

By Emily Harter

Washington File Staff Writer

Washington -- The Sudan crisis is a great tragedy but may open a window of opportunity for women, said panelists at a conference held at the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) October 14. The internationally monitored peace talks present Sudanese women the chance finally to be heard and to regain rights that were eroded over the past twenty years.

"We are at the stage of making it or breaking it," Suzanne Jambo, the NGO Coordinator for the New Sudanese Indigenous Network (NSIN), told Sudanese women at a conference to discuss women's involvement in Sudan's political life.

Jambo said that one of the positive aspects of the 20-year long civil war in Sudan was that it brought the rural woman to the forefront in heading households and in actively forcing their way out into the public domain. "There is so much awareness now among Sudanese women," she said. If women could harness these strengths and take them a step further, Jambo said, they could use upcoming peace talks as an opportunity to regain the political representation they lost when a fundamentalist regime took power.

The civil war that is being fought between northern Muslims associated with the Sudanese government and southern black Africans has resulted in approximately 2.2 million lost lives. The United

States Government has been working for three years to facilitate peace talks between Khartoum and the Sudanese People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) that resulted in the recent signing of a framework agreement in Naivasha, Kenya.

Women, who represent 60 percent on the population and 80 percent of the food producers in the country, are, at the same time, the most oppressed group and the major bearers of the brunt of the war, Jambo said. They "have a legitimate human right to participate in governing the Sudan and making it a correct Sudan," and therefore need to be represented at any peace talks.

However, Jambo warned, Sudanese women cannot act as the Eritrean women did and take for granted that the liberation movement [will] enable [them] to participate in the government, or they will miss their chance. Jambo also noted that they would need the support from worldwide groups and women's organizations to take advantage of the situation.

The NGO coordinator explained Sudanese women are very capable and ready to participate in the government. "When the Sudanese government lifted its hands from providing social services to the population, [women] have been in the forefront in keeping communities together. We have the expertise and we know the issues."

In fact, Jambo explained, Sudan had a history of women serving in government and the legislature starting as early as the 1960s, but lost this right after the National Islamic Front (NIF) came to power in 1989 and implemented laws that placed women and non-Muslims in legally inferior positions.

Human Rights Watch reported that "during the early purges following the 1989 coup, thousands of women were dismissed from their jobs in accordance with statements of President al-Bashir, who described the ideal Sudanese woman as one who took care of herself and her reputation, cared for her husband and her children, did her household duties, and was a devout Muslim."

According to Muna Khugali, the coordinator of the Sudan National Women's Convention, interpretations of shari'a law by the fundamentalist regime have mainly targeted women, affecting them in all areas of their lives, "controlling every move women make." Outside the capital, the enforcement of these laws such as wearing the hijab is even stricter than in Khartoum. A woman who appears in public without Islamic dress can be subjected to a flogging of twenty-five lashes and/or a fine. Under the current regime women may only ride in the back seats of vehicles to avoid sitting in front of men, cannot work in coffee or cafeteria premises, and are restricted from traveling abroad without the consent of a male relative.

Besides these battles with traditions and the Sudanese government, Jambo declared "the war has made the discrimination even worse with cultural violence, for example, violence against women in terms of systematic rape and ethnic cleansing."

One Sudanese woman stood up at the conference and pleaded that women must gain representation in the government so that they could bring justice to their rape cases via a Commission of Inquiry. She said, "We need to see that women are there (on the commission). I cannot go and say that I was raped to a man. If a woman is there, our case is put on the table, and the world will know the suffering of the women of Sudan."

"It is very important that we are there to ensure that there are reforms in women's issues, in terms of our security and our economic development. It is very important and very vital," Jambo concluded.

Carla Koppel, the deputy director of Women Waging Peace, an organization devoted to increasing women's involvement in policy-making around the world, told the Washington File that her organization would like to see a situation in which Sudanese women were empowered through the peace process to make peace more sustainable.

"If you are looking for creative new ways to prevent conflict," Koppel said, "the easiest and sometimes the most obvious way is to begin to bring in the other 50 percent of the population. I think there is an enormous opportunity for women to get involved in the case of the peace talks in Darfur currently being set up."

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AEF302 10/20/2004

U.S. Support for Africa's Agricultural Development Praised (World Food Prize winner points to capacity-building fellowships) (650)

By Kathryn McConnell

Washington File Staff Writer

Washington -- Research fellowships funded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) will do much to help agricultural professionals in Africa develop the capacity to increase food production and reduce hunger, says one of the 2004 World Food Prize winners.

Speaking October 19 at a World Food Day symposium at Howard University in Washington, Monty Jones, a scientist from Sierra Leone, praised the ongoing support for Africa's agricultural development provided by USDA and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID).

World Food Day was observed October 16.

In March, USDA announced the establishment of the Norman E. Borlaug International Science and Technology Fellows Program to help developing countries strengthen sustainable agricultural practices by providing U.S.-based, short-term scientific training to visiting researchers, policymakers and university faculty members.

Also in March, Jones and Yuan Longping were named winners of the World Food Prize at a ceremony at the State Department in Washington. They were presented the prize on October 14 in Iowa.

The award recognizes the achievements of individuals who have advanced human development by improving the quality, quantity or availability of food in the world.

Jones, executive director of the Ghana-based Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA), is the first African to receive the prize, founded by Nobel laureate Norman Borlaug. Yuan is director-general of the China National Hybrid Rice Research and Development Center.

At the Howard University forum, Jones said U.S. support for agricultural programs in Africa, based on information sharing about the effective use of traditional and modern technologies, is helping the region meet the challenges of long-term agricultural development.

The scientist said agricultural development in Africa also is being advanced by the African Union's New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). Through NEPAD, Africa's leaders are beginning to understand the need to adopt policy reforms that support long-term advancement in crop and livestock production in ways that preserve the region's rich biodiversity.

FARA helps NEPAD identify priorities for strengthening food security, Jones said.

In June the Group of Eight (G8) industrialized nations adopted an Africa Action Plan that supports the NEPAD goal to end hunger in Africa. The G8 consists of the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan and Russia.

African countries also are coming together at the regional and sub-regional levels to develop biosafety regulations, Jones said.

"We are seeing the green light in Africa . . . with our leaders recognizing that we have to put in place the structures for greater productivity and food security," Jones said.

Jones won the World Food Prize for developing a cross between a native type of Asian rice imported into Africa 500 years ago and a native type of African rice. His "New Rice for Africa" -- carrying the best traits of the two traditional varieties -- produces high-yield, nonshattering, stress resistant, high protein grains that also appeal to the taste and aroma preferences of Africans, he said.

Yuan also was honored for developing high-yield rice varieties.

Rice is the primary food for more than half of the world's population.

Although Jones developed the new rice variety through conventional breeding, he said breeding through bioengineering also holds promise for increasing food security in Africa.

Biotechnology can be used to create "genetic combinations" that address specific productivity restraints, Jones said.

For instance, biotechnology is currently being used to develop crops specially suited for Africa's growing conditions, such as a high yielding banana with fibers strong enough for use in weavings and maize that is resistant to the noxious weed striga, he said.

Jones said that foods derived from biotechnology have proved to be as safe as those developed conventionally.

The Howard University forum was co-sponsored by the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the U.S.-based Council on Foreign Relations.

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AEF303 10/20/2004

Africa Society Bestows "Visionary" Awards on Two U.S. Lawmakers

(Congressmen Royce and Payne recognized for championing African issues) (930)

By Jim Fisher-Thompson

Washington File Staff Writer

Washington -- Representatives Ed Royce (Republican of California) and Donald Payne (Democrat of New Jersey) operate in a Congress usually dominated and divided by partisan politics. But over the past eight years, the veteran lawmakers from opposite ends of the political spectrum have cooperated to bring a shared vision of hope for Africa -- an endeavor that recently earned them both accolades from an educational organization that promotes greater understanding of the continent in America.

More than 200 guests, including 15 African ambassadors and scholar and filmmaker Ali Mazrui, attended a luncheon October 14 to honor Royce and Payne as recipients of the Africa Society's first annual "Visionaries Award".

The society is an educational outreach arm of the National Summit on Africa, an advocacy organization established more than five years ago with help from the Ford and Carnegie foundations to foster closer U.S.-African ties. Corporate members of the summit that sponsored and were represented at the ceremony included Discovery Communications, Gap Inc., The Coca Cola Co., and DaimlerChrysler.

Leonard Robinson, Africa Summit president and chief executive officer, explained that the Africa Society was launched three years ago in partnership with Discovery Communications (parent company of the Discovery cable television channel) "to inform and educate the general American public on every aspect of Africa -- its past, its present challenges and progress, and its future aspirations and promise."

Two men have especially been integral to that mission, Robinson told his audience, "So today we pay special honor and tribute to Congressmen Ed Royce and Donald Payne -- two visionaries who have made and are making a difference in how the United States interacts with the leaders and people of Africa.

"Together, these members of Congress have played a significant role in cultivating a more Africa-oriented atmosphere in the House of Representatives," Robinson explained. "From fighting for more resources to end wars to seeking innovative solutions to age-old problems such as famine and hunger, they have worked hard and made progress in elevating the human condition on the continent of Africa."

Tim Bork, a former senior official in Africa with the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) whose innovative proposal and fund-raising skills launched the Summit on Africa, presented the awards to Royce and Payne.

Royce is stepping down after eight years as chairman of the House Africa Subcommittee where he held more than 60 public hearings on issues ranging from HIV/AIDS to peacekeeping. Both he and fellow committee member Payne, who focused on human rights issues in Africa, were instrumental in forging a unique bipartisan approach to social and development issues on the continent.

An important result of their leadership was passage of the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) in 2000, a landmark trade legislation -- the first with sub-Saharan Africa -- that received strong support from both Democrats and Republicans in Congress. The Congress has since passed the AGOA II and AGOA III

legislation in 2002 and 2004 that extended the original law's mandates.

Chairman of the National Summit on Africa, Ambassador Andrew Young, who had served in Congress himself in the 1970's, said, "Regardless of what party you're in or your expectations for the future, one thing is certain and that is that African policy is thoroughly grounded in bipartisan support" in Congress.

He praised Royce, stating, "There is nobody ... in America" that cares about and "knows Africa better." Because of his political skill and tact, he said, Royce was able to forge alliances with organizations like the Congressional Black Caucus to lobby both the Clinton and Bush administrations for funding to help Africans respond to pressing issues like poverty, HIV/AIDS and peacekeeping.

Royce thanked Payne and others for working "to build a constituency for Africa that helped to give the continent a seat at the table when it comes to U.S. foreign policy. I think working together -- Republicans and Democrats, Congress and the Administration -- has helped us get a few things done," specially citing Subcommittee Staff Director Tom Sheehy for his hard work and high energy in that regard.

Royce said AGOA was an important legacy of his tenure at the subcommittee. "I have traveled to many African countries and I have seen firsthand the hundreds of thousands of jobs created" that are "lifting millions of Africans [out of poverty] by giving them access to our markets here in the United States for their products."

Although the rest of the world is helping, Africans still hold the keys to their own destiny, Royce emphasized. "The days of the few benefiting spectacularly at the expense of the many must end. I've been fairly outspoken about the need for greater accountability. All of us in this room know that Africa's [bountiful] natural resources have rarely produced sustainable economic development in Africa."

Even though many things still need to be done to help Africans fight poverty and disease, "We are at least on the [policy] map," Payne told the audience. Genocide in Darfur is a troubling occurrence but "The AU [African Union] is moving forward" and much other progress is being made on the continent, he added.

South African Ambassador Barbara Masekela agreed, commenting at the ceremony: "We have been taking a hard look at ourselves to identify what we have to do to reverse decades of deepening poverty and how best to effect reform -- political, economic, social -- that stands the test of time."

(The Washington File is a product of the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://usinfo.state.gov>)

AEF403 10/21/2004

U.S. Labor Dept. Awards \$18.65 Million to Fight Human Trafficking

(Grants will fund services for victims, those at risk, governments) (630)

The U.S. Department of Labor has awarded \$18.65 million in grants to combat human trafficking around the world, Labor Secretary Elaine Chao announced.

The amount includes \$3.75 million to implement anti-trafficking projects in Brazil, Cambodia, Moldova and Sierra Leone, and \$14.9 million to fight child-labor trafficking in Africa, Latin America, the Caribbean, Asia and the Pacific, according to an October 20 Labor Department press release.

The grants will fund projects that provide employment services to adults who have been trafficked into forced labor and to women at risk of being trafficked. Projects also will support communities by improving schools and providing education, shelter and counseling to children who have been trafficked or who are at risk, and income-generating opportunities for their parents, the release said.

Grant funds will be used to work with national and local governments to improve law enforcement, map trafficking routes and implement public awareness campaigns, according to the release.

Trafficking of humans targets mostly women and children, Chao said.

The grant recipients are Catholic Relief Services, Winrock International and The Hagar Project.

Following is the text of the department's press release:

U.S. Department of labor

October 20, 2004

U.S. Labor Department Awards \$18.65 Million in Grants in FY 2004

To Battle Adult and Child Trafficking Around the World

WASHINGTON -- U.S. Labor Secretary Elaine L. Chao today announced \$18.65 million in grants to combat human trafficking around the world. The overall amount includes \$3.75 million awarded to three non-government organizations to implement anti-trafficking projects in Brazil, Cambodia, Moldova, and Sierra Leone, and \$14.9 million to combat trafficking of children for exploitative labor in Africa, Latin America, the Caribbean, Asia and the Pacific.

"Trafficking in human beings is an evil that targets mostly women and children, whose suffering can scarcely be imagine," said Secretary of Labor Elaine L. Chao. "President Bush and this department are committed to preventing trafficking, protecting victims and prosecuting traffickers. These projects will help save the lives of men, women and children around the world."

The projects to prevent human trafficking are being funded as part of President Bush's international Combating Trafficking in Persons initiative. In Brazil, Catholic Relief Services will provide employment services and income-generating activities for adults, mostly agricultural workers, who have been trafficked into forced labor. In addition, it will work with the national and local governments to improve law enforcement, map trafficking routes, and implement public awareness campaigns and adult education programs. Catholic Relief Services will also work in Moldova to enhance legitimate employment opportunities and related services.

In Cambodia, the department will work with The Hagar Project to develop alternative livelihoods as well as an employment program targeted at former trafficking victims and at-risk women.

In Sierra Leone, Winrock International will support community and faith-based organizations in combating child trafficking by improving schools and providing shelter, counseling, education and skills training.

An additional \$14.9 million to combat trafficking of children will support projects in the Dominican Republic, South America, Indonesia and in the sub-region of West and Central Africa. These efforts will

provide direct assistance to children who either have been trafficked or who are at risk of being trafficked. Among the services to be provided are education and training opportunities for children and income generating opportunities for their parents as a means of reducing the risk that children will be trafficked. These projects will also seek to build local capacity in the targeted countries for

confronting the problem of trafficking, one of the worst forms of child labor as identified by ILO Convention 182.

(Distributed by the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://usinfo.state.gov>)

AEF404 10/21/2004

Labor Dept. Awards \$9 million for U.N. Workplace AIDS Programs

(Funds to international labor agency will target awareness, discrimination) (420)

The U.S. Department of Labor has awarded \$9 million to the U.N. International Labor Organization (ILO) to implement workplace-based HIV/AIDS programs.

The grant will fund workplace-based awareness programs and efforts to reduce workplace discrimination against people with HIV/AIDS, according to an October 20 press release.

Reduced job discrimination could encourage people with HIV/AIDS to seek testing, counseling and other services, the release said.

The department currently funds projects in more than 25 countries, according to the release.

Following is the text of the department's press release:

U.S. Department of Labor

October 20, 2004

U.S. Labor Department Awards \$9 Million Grant to International Labor Organization to Fight HIV/AIDS in the Workplace

WASHINGTON -- U.S. Labor Secretary Elaine L. Chao today announced a \$9 million grant to the International Labor Organization (ILO) to implement workplace-based HIV/AIDS programs around the world.

"In addition to being a serious health issue, HIV/AIDS is also an economic issue," said U.S. Secretary of Labor Elaine L. Chao. "Because the rate of infection is highest among the working-age population, this disease has a significant impact on the worldwide labor force."

According to the ILO, as many as 28 million workers worldwide have been lost to HIV/AIDS since the start of the epidemic. "At the current rate of infection, we will face both an economic and humanitarian crisis as the global workforce is affected, causing economic growth to slow and increasing poverty around the world," said Chao.

The grant, which is awarded by the Department's Bureau of International Labor Affairs (ILAB), is part of an on-going initiative to help stem the epidemic by using the workplace as a venue for education and prevention efforts. The Department is also focusing its efforts on working with governments, workers, and employers to decrease employment discrimination against people living with HIV/AIDS so that people may be encouraged to seek voluntary counseling, testing and other services without fear of losing their jobs.

The new \$9 million grant will be used to fund programs in countries that are facing or anticipating significant rates of infection. These countries include Burkina Faso, Cameroon, China, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, and Trinidad and Tobago.

ILAB has been funding international workplace-based HIV/AIDS projects since 2000 and has dedicated a total of \$42 million to the initiative. It is currently funding projects in more than 25 countries around the world.

(Distributed by the Bureau of International Information Programs,

U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://usinfo.state.gov>)

AEF201 10/19/2004

VOA's "Ejo Bite?" Radio Gives African Refugee Children a Voice

(Refugee camp youths do much of the reporting for unique radio program) (1360)

By Charles W. Corey

Washington File Staff Writer

Washington -- Hundreds of thousands of refugee children and residents of Africa's Great Lakes Region -- Rwanda, Burundi and Tanzania -- are learning that the world is still open to them to live better lives through "Ejo Bite?" Radio, a unique Voice of America program that helps refugee youth explore their future.

"Ejo Bite?" -- which literally means "How about the future?" -- broadcasts news, feature stories and radio dramas that are produced by young refugees in the camps in the Great Lakes Region in the local languages Kirundi and Kinyarwanda. The Voice of America (VOA) has taught the youngsters journalism techniques so they can conduct interviews and prepare weekly programs that have special interest for the youth of their region. The programs are assembled by VOA in Washington and then broadcast back to the region.

Michala de Comarmond, chief of the Central Africa Service of the Voice of America, and Marie-Claire Sissoko, the manager and producer of "Ejo Bite?," talked about the 3-year-old service in a recent interview with the Washington File.

Comarmond stressed that as the voice of the refugee youth in Burundi, Rwanda and Tanzania, "Ejo Bite?" covers topics of particular interest to youth across the Great Lakes Region. "Ejo Bite?," she told the Washington File, teaches, informs, advises and, most importantly, gives the children of the region hope.

"Youth reporters in the region do their interviews and send them in to Washington for the show. One 30-minute program is broadcast in three different time slots each week by a variety of methods -- AM, FM and shortwave. The children can listen to the program on more than 2,000 wind-up radios given to them free of charge.

"A very important part of this show is the drama series," she said. With Africa's strong oral traditions, "I believe storytelling is important. We have been lucky to find local writers and crew. The dramas are recorded in each country by the young kids. Every week we end up with somewhere between seven to 10 minutes of drama."

The subjects that are covered in the dramas are determined through back-and-forth deliberations between the field and Washington, she said. The drama scripts are written by professional writers in the region and portray a broad array of topics of interest to Africa's youth: HIV/AIDS, education, reconciliation, forgiveness, tolerance and democracy.

"You name it. We are open to ideas," she said. "If they [the instructional broadcasts] are presented in the form of dramas or soap operas, they really have an incredible effect because the children don't feel that

we are preaching to them." Since the children, aged 12 to 20, are involved in the programming, they learn from it as well, she said.

Besides reaching the target youth audience, Comarmond said, "we also have a spillover audience, as evidenced by the letters that are coming in from the parents of the children ... that is, if there are parents, because a lot of these children are orphans."

The most compelling element of the programming at "Ejo

Bite?," according to Marie-Claire Sissoko, the program's manager-producer, is the fact that the main actors in much of its programming are children. "Children, we know, are the future of the world and our countries -- especially in that region," she said.

Sissoko, a native of Burundi, said: "We have so many children who have seen so much unbelievable, horrible stuff. Our show gives them hope. We give them a voice. They express themselves in their own words and then they hope for the future. They see that people are willing to listen and to encourage them and to help them find solutions to their problems. So it is a very, very important show."

Asked if the program has special significance for her, Sissoko said: "It means a lot to me, obviously, because I am from there. I know how the children in my country have been suffering, so it means a lot, really, to be able to see that I can do something to help -- even if it is small."

Reinforcing that point, Comarmond said, "A lot of love goes into" the program. "Love is a special ingredient."

Additionally, Comarmond said, the program has won a Distinguished Journalism Award in humanitarian reporting.

Comarmond said the idea for "Ejo Bite?" came to her while she was thinking about her own children and grandchildren. "How do they behave? Whom do they trust," she asked herself.

"Of course, they trust parents and maybe to a certain degree grandparents ... but I realized that the most important players in children's lives are their peers and that they would confide in their peers, often telling stories to their friends that they would never tell their parents."

That is when, she said, she realized the importance of giving the voice of the program to the children. What reinforced that, she said, is the fact that "here in Washington, we are living in a different world. How can we really talk to the children in Africa from our plush offices in Washington? It would not sound correct. It would sound like preaching."

For that reason, "I thought that it would be very important that we take this approach. We knew we were taking risks," not knowing if the programming concept could be pulled off.

"We all know the tragic past of much of the region and the power of radio in that region -- the hate radios -- so it was a decision that was examined and re-examined" before being implemented.

Asked about the broadcast's impact, Sissoko said: "We have seen the impact" firsthand. "The children are starting to talk. Racial issues caused the war. Since the start of the program, we have used children from different ethnic backgrounds, which sets an example for the refugee children.

"Now they know they need to get together. They play together. They do everything together. What I would like to see for the future is to bring all the children together to erase all those racial differences and the discrimination that comes with it. That is my main wish."

Comarmond estimated the program's audience at hundreds of thousands, while acknowledging that it is very difficult to obtain an accurate estimate, and she said the programs are having a definite impact.

To illustrate her point, she gave a startling and graphic example.

In Rwanda, she said, prisoners are required to bring their children to the prison when they serve their sentences. "We received e-mails and letters about this issue ... pointing out the lack of nutrition and education at the prisons for children," she said. "The children were being ill-treated."

A youth reporter from "Ejo Bite?" was able to get permission to visit the prison and do a story on the conditions under which the children were living. "We broadcast that story. It took maybe a couple of weeks, but the immediate impact was evident. The prison received milk for the children and some attempts at educating them as well. The hygiene also improved," she said.

Comarmond said an adult would have never been granted access to the prison or obtained permission from the Rwandan government to do such a story. Because the story was done by a youth reporter, she said, the government felt less threatened and allowed the young reporter access.

"She took her microphone into the prison and asked the children questions that any child would ask another child: 'What did you eat today?' The story just developed around that and received an immediate reaction." Even though the evidence is anecdotal, the impact was very real, said Comarmond.

The "Ejo Bite?" project has received a grant from the U.S. State Department's Bureau of Population, Migration and Refugees and operates in partnership with the Freeplay Foundation for Lifeline [registered trademark] radios, which has provided wind-up radios to the youths in the camps.

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AEF202 10/19/2004

Citizens in U.S., Islamic Countries Seek to Ease Tensions

(Hope not Hate initiative holds town meetings, videoconferences) (1040)

By Phyllis McIntosh

Washington File Special Correspondent

Washington -- Through town hall meetings and videoconferences linking college students in the United States and Islamic countries, a project that grew out of the tragedy of September 11, 2001, aims to ease tensions between Americans and Muslims in the United States and abroad.

The initiative, known as Hope not Hate, was launched on the second anniversary of the 9/11 attacks by Americans for Informed Democracy, an organization that works to raise global awareness on college campuses. The first round of town hall meetings, held in more than a dozen U.S. cities on September 12 and 13, 2003, brought together 1,500 concerned citizens, policymakers, journalists, military leaders, and scholars to explore common ground between America and the Islamic world.

In 2004, the project expanded to a full month and involved 5,000 people at more than 30 town hall meetings held on college campuses in 21 states and the District of Columbia. The Families of September 11, and The People Speak, an initiative that promotes discussion of foreign policy, joined Americans for Informed Democracy in sponsoring the series.

Hope not Hate 2004 concluded with three days of videoconferences between young leaders at nine universities in Middle America -- from Georgia to South Dakota --and nine in predominantly Muslim countries, including Egypt, Indonesia, Kuwait, Lebanon, Morocco, Pakistan, Senegal, Turkey and Uganda.

"The goal of this unprecedented series is two-fold," says Hope not Hate co-chair Ambassador Akbar Ahmed, former Pakistani High Commissioner (Ambassador) to the United Kingdom. "First we want to build a bridge of understanding between non-Muslims and

Muslims in the U.S. and then extend that bridge of understanding from the U.S. to the Muslim world."

U.S. action in Iraq and the global war on terrorism were the main topics of an October 13 videoconference involving 80 students at the University of Texas in Austin, Texas, Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia, Dakar, Senegal, and Kampala, Uganda. The Americans expressed strong views both for and against the war in Iraq, while the Africans, mostly opposed to the war, argued that America should not act unilaterally but in the words of one young man "should begin to move with the world."

Many of the American and African students agreed that eradicating poverty and injustice in the world will be more effective than military action in fighting terrorism. "Violence is not the solution to terrorism," said a student in Senegal. "I would like to see the U.S. use its money to help people improve themselves. Then you will have peace."

The Africans also cautioned against viewing all Muslims as Arabs and blaming Islam for terrorism. "The solution is to open yourselves to other cultures," advised a young man in Uganda. "It would be good for younger Americans to get information about other cultures from outside your country."

Reflecting on the impact of terrorism, a young woman in Atlanta said, "More than anything I fear the fear. We must be determined not to let hate shape our future."

"The biggest enemy of peace is not Islam but the heart of man," said a student in Uganda. "All of us should look into our hearts, study our hearts, and there will be peace in the world."

At a town hall meeting at Georgetown University in Washington, October 6, speakers discussed how the September 11 attacks changed American policy toward Muslims in the United States and abroad and called on moderates everywhere to help stem the growing animosity between America and the Islamic world.

"In reality, people in the Muslim world and Americans have more in common than they have differences," said Samer Shehata, visiting scholar at Georgetown's Center for Contemporary Arab Studies. "Whenever I hear 'Why do they hate us?' I have this sort of revulsion because the question is so fundamentally flawed. People in the Mideast may be angry with our policies, they may not respect our political leaders, but is 'hate' the proper word? What about the word 'they'? Are we going to homogenize the 280 million people in the Arab world or the 1.2 billion people in the Muslim world and say they all feel the same way? The word 'us' is also problematic. [People in the Muslim world] might hate some of our leaders, but they don't hate you and me."

Helen Samhan, executive director of the Arab American Institute, spoke about the impact of the September 11 attacks on Muslims in the United States. She contended that most Americans have long held negative images of Arabs in their midst, "so when 9/11 happened it was not surprising that all those negative stereotypes exploded."

Samhan identified three phases of reaction following the terrorist attacks: the "hot pursuit stage" in the immediate aftermath of September 11, when some people who were perceived to be Muslim were harassed or attacked; then "under-the-radar discrimination and harassment," especially in the workplace; and finally the "most onerous" phase, in which Muslim people and organizations are subjected to various forms of racial profiling.

"We as Arab American advocates are very concerned that the backlash since 9/11 has impacted a lot of cultural and political discourse in this country and that there is now a real license for anti-Islamic bigotry."

Nikki Stern, whose husband died in the September 11 attacks and who now serves as executive director of Families of September 11, declared, "I do not now and I have never given permission for the death of my husband to be an excuse to perpetrate stereotypes, intolerance, or prejudice."

She used the analogy of a bridge to call for moderation: "Structurally a bridge is stronger near the ends than where it is suspended. Because it is most vulnerable in the middle, it needs special reinforcements. In an age when it may seem that dialogue has been replaced by diatribes and reason has been overtaken by rancor on both sides of the bridge, we need to strengthen the middle of that bridge and what it represents, which is thoughtful discussion and compassionate understanding."

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AEF102 10/18/2004

United States Appeals WTO Ruling on Cotton Subsidies

(Letter to trade organization's appellate body cites "erroneous findings") (380)

By Berta Gomez

Washington File Staff Writer

Washington -- The United States is appealing a World Trade Organization (WTO) ruling that U.S. cotton subsidies violate international trading rules.

In an October 18 letter to the WTO appellate body, the U.S. Mission to the WTO said the organization's dispute settlement body (DSB) had based its ruling against the United States on "erroneous findings on issues of law and related legal interpretations."

Among the points that the United States plans to appeal is the DSB finding that U.S. subsidies have suppressed world-market prices for cotton. The letter lists a total of 14 points in the DSB ruling that the United States will challenge.

Under WTO rules, the appellate body has up to three months to study U.S. objections to the ruling in the case, which was originally brought by Brazil, and issue its determination.

After formal release of the ruling, U.S. Trade Representative Robert Zoellick on September 8 gave notice that the United States would appeal.

"We strongly disagree with some aspects of the panel report, which we will be appealing," Zoellick said in a news release. "The facts do not show that U.S. farm programs have distorted trade and caused low cotton prices."

Zoellick reiterated the U.S. position that some of the issues raised in the cotton-subsidy case should be resolved through ongoing WTO negotiations rather than dispute-settlement proceedings.

One part of the panel ruling concerned what is called the "peace clause" from the 1994 agreement creating the WTO, which generally prohibited challenges to domestic and export agriculture subsidies during the agreement's implementation period. The panel ruled that the peace clause did not cover U.S. domestic subsidies and export credit guarantees for cotton.

The panel also ruled that some U.S. domestic subsidies did depress world cotton prices, thus harming Brazilian competitors. Some of those subsidies go to marketing loans and counter-cyclical payments, which are made when commodity prices fall below a threshold. Other subsidies, called Step 2 payments, are made to domestic users and exporters when U.S. cotton prices exceed a

threshold, thus promoting use of U.S. cotton even if it has a higher price than foreign cotton.

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AEF103 10/18/2004

Peace Corps Helping Others Better Understand U.S., Official Says

(Volunteers highlight U.S. diversity, agency's Vasquez adds) (640)

By Kathryn McConnell

Washington File Staff Writer

Washington -- In a world of security concerns and cultural misunderstandings, Peace Corps volunteers from all backgrounds are changing views of the United States and of its people, says Gaddi Vasquez, the agency's director.

"There has never been a greater time to promote understanding," he said October 14 at the National Press Club in Washington.

With more than 7,500 volunteers, the Peace Corps is at its highest level in 28 years and hopes to grow further, Vasquez said, adding that the institution is continually changing to meet developing countries' needs. In recent years, he said, the agency has expanded its programs in agriculture, community development, information technology, HIV/AIDS, and programs focusing on educating girls and helping them build self-esteem.

Volunteers also are working around the world in areas such as environmental protection and job creation, he said.

But as the agency changes, the Peace Corps goal remains the same: "promoting global peace and understanding," Vasquez said.

The director said that there are no boundaries to where the Peace Corps could serve in the developing world. He said currently 20 percent of Peace Corps volunteers serve in 18 Muslim countries, ranging from Morocco to Uzbekistan and Mauritania. Of the 27 countries that have asked for the Peace Corps to start or restart programs, 13 are Muslim, he said.

"These countries want to better understand America," he added.

The Peace Corps also is evaluating how it might reopen a program in India, where 1,000 volunteers once served, Vasquez said.

Vasquez said the effect of Peace Corps volunteers on the people in their host communities can last lifetimes. For instance, he said, a woman who is now a leader in Afghanistan's government told him that she had learned English from a volunteer.

As a boy, Peru's President Alejandro Toledo also was taught by volunteers, Vasquez said.

By living and working at the community level, Peace Corps volunteers are able to change beliefs "that all Americans look the same," Vasquez said.

He recalled a Muslim volunteer serving in Cameroon telling him that his host community initially was surprised to see a Muslim from the United States. Then the volunteer sat down and talked to his neighbors and they developed a greater appreciation for the diversity of the United States, Vasquez said.

Vasquez, a Hispanic American, recalled another story illustrating how the Peace Corps helps change peoples' views of the United States. He said when he visited a school in Casablanca, a Moroccan boy told him, "You don't look like an American."

"That experience gave me an opportunity to put a face on America" for the boy, the director said.

To further illustrate the diversity within the Peace Corps, Vasquez pointed to the volunteers now in the Peace Corps' newest host country -- Mexico. That group includes volunteers born in Iran, Armenia, the Czech Republic and India as well as in the United States, he said.

Wherever they serve, Peace Corps volunteers do so in a manner that respects their host countries' traditions and cultures, Vasquez added.

Since its beginning in 1961, the Peace Corps has served in 137 countries. It now serves in 71. The Peace Corps serves only in countries where it has been invited and where volunteers' safety and security can be assured, Vasquez said.

More than 170,000 people have served as Peace Corps volunteers.

Pointing to the Peace Corps' impact on the people of the United States, Vasquez said that when volunteers return home they are able to help people in their communities better understand the cultures and values of the countries in which they served.

The administration has requested \$401 million for the Peace Corps for the fiscal year that began October 1, Vasquez said.

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